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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM The Charlie Rose Show

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SUBJECT Admiral Stansfield Turner

CHARLIE ROSE: Admiral Stansfield Turner has had a record of extraordinary accomplishment in his life. He was a brilliant scholar, a Rhodes scholar. He went on to become an admiral in the Navy. President Carter appointed him as Director of the CIA.

In 1981, January 20th, you left government to become a private citizen and a consultant. When you looked at the world in 1981, January, how did you size it up? What were the relative sensitive points? How were we doing in contrast to the Soviets and the Chinese?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think, Charlie, that one of the major factors was the Third World, the countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, were becoming increasingly important to this country. We had focused our intelligence, much of our foreign policy for many years almost exclusively on the Soviet Union and its activities. We have to begin shifting our attention.

Secondly, there were problems developing, even then, with our allies. We weren't paying enough attention to their attitudes and outlooks. The Europeans in particular. And that's become worse since 1981. We need, I believe, in the future to pay more attention to consulting with, understanding, and working closely with our allies if we're going to keep those relationships.

I think those are two of the principal trends.

ROSE: I want to come to the relationship with the allies and the pipeline decision. But first the Soviet Union.

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There seems to be an ongoing debate, and the Reagan Administration certainly believes that we have not been as strong in defense as we ought to be, and therefore they're spending a lot of our budget appropriations for raising the level of armaments in this government.

How did you measure the contrast between the relative military power of the Soviet Union and the United States in 1981?

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's a very difficult and complex question which I would want to break into three phases. You have three reasons in the United States for having military power. The first is to deter nuclear attack on our country. And I believe our posture here vis-a-vis the Soviet Union is quite good.

Secondly, you have to worry about the possibility of a major conventional war breaking out with the Soviets, in Europe primarily. Here I think our condition is satisfactory but deteriorating.

Thirdly, we keep military force to intervene in remote areas of the world, like the British had to in the Falklands, like we are concerned in recent years about the Persian Gulf and our oil supplies. And here I think our capability, which is not measured directly against the Soviet Union, but against wherever we might have to fight, is only marginal. I don't think we've emphasized that enough in recent years.

ROSE: How do you measure the Russian mind? What did you know, sitting there at Langley, with all of the data you had, with all of the information, the one person who was absorbing everything we knew about the Soviets? What are their intentions? How do you separate the myth from the reality? What do they want? What kinds of demands are being made on the Soviet leadership?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, it's very difficult because it's such a different society than ours. The only thing I would like to say, though, is that I believe we make a bigger effort to understand the Soviets, and do a better job at it, than they do of understanding us. And that's one of the big dangers in the world today, that they really don't understand the United States at the leadership level in the Soviet Union.

ROSE: Why not?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because they have a very different culture, they have a very different outlook on life, and they so restrict freedom of the press, they so restrict contact between their people and the rest of the world. And that's one of the

3

great strengths that we have on our side.

ROSE: But they have had an ambassador who's been here longer than any other ambassador in the United States, clearly a watcher of the United States. Is his assumptions about us wrong?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No. I think Mr...

ROSE: Are they wrong?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Mr. Dobrynin must understand the United States reasonably well. Mr. Gromyko, the Foreign Minister, who's been in office longer than most of us can remember, must understand us reasonably well.

I think, though, they have a great deal of difficulty -- and we had some evidence of this -- in getting through to the top leadership and really making their case.

You never should forget the fact that it's a totalitarian society over there.

Now, I frequently had to go to President Carter and tell unpleasant things or tell him things that he didn't want to hear.

ROSE: What was the most unpleasant you ever told him?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I don't think I want to get into that in specifics. But there were times when my analysis of what was happening in a foreign country was quite different than where he wanted us to go, in a sense. So I just had to tell it to him as I saw it. Now, I was always with a little bit of trepidation when you go to the President of the United States and tell him bad news. But I never worried that I would lose my head, literally. And I think in the Soviet Union you have to be concerned about that. I think there's a lot of trepidation about telling bad news in a totalitarian society.

ROSE: Let's turn that around. The head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, if I'm pronouncing it correctly,...

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think so.

ROSE: ...is frequently rumored as the next -- as the successor to Leonid Brezhnev. What did you know about Andropov? What kind of man is he? What kind of family does he have? How does he feel about U.S.-Soviet relationships?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think Andropov is considered to be a more moderate person in the Soviet Union. I think he does not understand the United States. He has never been over here. He

4

has not traveled widely. He's a very capable bureaucrat. He managed the KGB well, from all that we could see. But I wouldn't want to speculate that he's really going to be the successor.

Among other things, you always have to remember that if you want to be the successor in the Soviet Union, the last thing you should do is let your...

ROSE: Announce that you're being a successor.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's right. You see, in a country where there is no established procedure for changing the top, there's no term of office -- I mean Mr. Brezhnev does not admit that he's going to leave, ever. So when somebody comes along and appears to be a candidate to replace him, that's the best way to get your head cut off.

ROSE: We've got to go to the break for a second. But let's stay with Brezhnev for a second.d

What did you know about his health, and what kind of information did you have? That's not the kind of information you can get from a satellite. It's not like national security information about military armaments. Did you know, did you have people inside that were telling you the quality of his health and whether he was going to die?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Now, Charlie, you don't really expect me to answer that question.

ROSE: But I thought I'd ask.

ADMIRAL TURNER: But I think you can tell the health of foreign leaders quite well, regardless of whether you have people on the inside. That helps if you have it, in many cases. But they make enough public appearances, and that you then take a qualified doctor and a qualified psychologist and you analyze all of the appearances, the symptoms that you can detect from what they do in public, and you can come up with a pretty good estimate. And we have some marvelous doctors, some marvelous psychologists at the Central Intelligence Agency who do evaluations of foreign leaders.

President Carter, in particular, found those very, very helpful to him when...

ROSE: But that's interesting. Because what would the Soviets have thought when President Carter collapsed at Camp David while running in the marathon that he was running in up there? What kind of information might that have signaled, might that have sent to them?

When we come back, I want to talk about the relative strengths of the KGB, the CIA, the Israeli intelligence, and how you see things changing as we enter the third year of the '80s.

We're with Admiral Stansfield Turner, former CIA Director, former admiral, former Rhodes scholar, a man with a keen insight into how the world shapes up in 1982.

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ROSE: Let's talk about intelligence a little bit in the '80s. There are constant comparisons between the KGB and the CIA. How do you make that comparison? Are we doing better? Are they doing better? Is their technology better? Do they have more because we're an open society and they're a closed society? Does that make it easier for them, and therefore they have more data on us than we do on them?

ADMIRAL TURNER: First, on the technical side, we're way ahead of them.

ROSE: This is satellites and the whole business.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Satellites and listening systems and all other kinds of techniques for collecting information clandestinely. This country has this marvelous industrial base of technology which is put on into our intelligence apparatus, and it's very good. We're well ahead.

Secondly, though, you also collect information by the use of spies, human agents. Here, the Soviets have many more than we do. I'm not sure just why they do, because we put it all in our magazines and newspapers and television shows.

But I don't think they're necessarily any better at it than we. We've watched some pretty clumsy human intelligence operations on their part. But it's really impossible to give you a weighted comparison.

But thirdly, and most importantly, in a closed totalitarian society, doing good analysis of those facts that are obtained by human or technical means of collecting information is much more difficult than it is in our open society. Again back to something we talked about earlier. If you come up with the wrong conclusion in the Soviet Union, you may not be able even to present it to anybody.

ROSE: We have -- has the role of the spy, the human contact, the person who is meeting with someone in the Soviet Union and someone who's meeting with a traitor in our country, has that role diminished with the rapid increase of the technology?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, it has not diminished, but it has changed radically. And many people, even in the intelligence world, don't quite understand that, Charlie.

You see, it used to be that when you needed some information you sent a spy out to get it. Today you say, "I want that information." The best way to get it without running any risk for our country is with a satellite or with some technical system. And therefore you try that first. And then that narrows down the field of what you send the spy to get. So you focus your spy more precisely.

Let me give you an example. Let's say we find there's a new building on the outskirts of the capital of Country X. So we have our satellite take pictures of this building and we decide, "Well, we want to know what that big factory is associated with."

So we turn the listening people who listen to radio signals loose and we say, "Tell us what that factory is communicating with in the capital." And we find out it's communicating with the Ministry of Nuclear Matters. Then we hire a spy and we say, "You get in that ministry and find out if it's over here in the nuclear weapons department or over here in the nuclear power plant department."

ROSE: Okay.

ADMIRAL TURNER: So the spy is still critical, 'cause you couldn't get that much any other way. But you focus him. You see what I mean? You make him much more productive.

ROSE: How do you hire him? How does that process work? I mean do you have -- you know, take me through that process of how do you -- do you just -- what do you do?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, you have to look all over the world for the right kind of people. It's a dragnet operation. Then you have to sound them out. And when you find somebody who is receptive to getting you the kind of information you want and who has, you believe, access to that kind of information, you do what we call -- you pitch them. You make the pitch to see if they will join with us. Some do join with us for money. Some join with us for patriotism. They realize we have a better ideology, a better grip on life than do the Soviets or other countries and they want to help us.

Then, Charlie, you've got a very difficult decision. Is this man or woman for real? Is he really going to work for the United States, or is he putting us on and going to feed us bad information and try to get something out of us in return?

ROSE: How do you make that decision?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It's difficult, very difficult.

But let me go back to those psychologists I mentioned a while ago. You know, we psychoanalyze those people we engage. Now, the psychologist, the psychiatrist never sees them or meets with them. But he takes every bit of information that our people get about that individual and we turn it over for a psychological evaluation.

Each one is individual. Each one is tough. And you never know for sure whether you're right.

ROSE: Is it more -- do we have -- and the reason I ask this question, I was told by someone who lives in Moscow that because most Soviet citizens are under such scrutiny, that person-to-person contact is terribly difficult. You almost have to exist with drops rather than person-to-person contact. And if, in fact, we have agents that we have contacted while they were in service in East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, some of the satellite countries, once they go back to the Soviet Union we really limit -- almost no contact, because we don't want to risk discovery. We know how closely they're watched.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Now you really want to know all the details of the inside spying operation.

ROSE: I do.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I see.

Let me just say that modern techniques of surveillance, using a lot of this technical equipment, are such that it's increasingly risky to conduct that kind of clandestine operation in a lot of countries, not just in the Soviet Union. Even what we call Third World countries are becoming more and more sophisticated.

So, the world of human intelligence not only is different today because you focus it differently, but you've got to be even more skilled today because it is more difficult.

ROSE: When you look for someone as a potential undercover operative, are there special qualities that those psychologists tell you are essential in someone that can be successful at that kind of task?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't think you can generalize that, no. Because people are motivated for all sorts of different reasons. As I said, some are really patriotic, in the sense that they want to work for us because they believe in what we stand for. Some want revenge. They've been mistreated by somebody or

some country. Others want money.

ROSE: Admiral Stansfield Turner talking about spying.d

When we come back I want to ask about Iran, a subject that caused enormous consternation in this country, and some allegations that the CIA had failed us.

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ROSE: Admiral Stansfield Turner, Iran. You look at what happened there, and I'm sure President Carter would have expected the CIA to have given him more information and to have known that the possibility of all of those anti-Shah forces coalescing and being able to overthrow the Shah. He must have asked you how come you didn't know.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Charlie, hindsight is a great thing. It's a great thing in any profession, intelligence or television or business. In this case, when you look back, there weren't many people on television or the newspapers or business or academia who were predicting in 1978 that the Shah would not be around very long in 1979.

ROSE: But it was not their responsibility to have the kind of information that you had.

ADMIRAL TURNER: We should have done better, and we didn't make that prediction either.

ROSE: Why didn't we?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because we made one assumption that proved to be false. We recognized there was a good bit of ferment, discontent inside Iran. But we assumed that the Shah would take care of that when the time came. Unfortunately, we thought he would take care of it with strong police or military power. Now, he had that power. There was no reason that he could not have suppressed those uprisings if he had really wanted to and been bloodthirsty enough to do so.

ROSE: Why didn't he do it?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't think you or I will ever know. One hypothesis is that he was too sick a man. The other, perhaps more likely, in my view, is that he had so lost touch with his own country that he didn't realize how serious these uprisings were until it was so late that it would have been very, very bloody.

ROSE: And he would bow out rather than too...



ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, he decided to temporize and try to hang on by other means than actually going out in the streets and beating people up.

So we made a bad call, that we thought...

ROSE: And the repercussions are incredible.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's true. But don't judge your nation's intelligence capabilities too much on whether it predicts immediate events. The question is, are you predicting long-term trends?

First of all, the government can't do a great deal in the short run. Even if in September-October 1978 we'd have said the Shah is a goner, there was a limited amount the United States could have done. It should have been three, four or five years ahead of that that we should have been doing a better job in intelligence, elsewhere in our country, even, in sensing that there was an undercurrent of difficulty there and predicting that it might be a problem.

ROSE: That suggests, then, that the operatives in all of those countries, whether Third World or in the Middle East, or wherever, ought to be spending a lot of time staying in touch with opposition forces. And one of the allegations was, at the time, that we did not do that, that our embassy and our CIA operatives, frequently in the same building, were not in fact in touch with the disparate elements.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, we just talked a minute ago about the problems of keeping contact with people in countries where they have a strong police force, a strong surveillance capability in their secret police. So there are great risks, even more in a friendly country, like Iran, than in an unfriendly country, like the Soviet Union, to getting caught being in contact with subversive people, from the government's point of view.

I don't want to acknowledge what you've alleged, because it wasn't quite that way.

ROSE: You've heard the allegation before.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I've heard the allegation once or twice.

ROSE: How do you measure the Israeli intelligence, the Mosad?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The Mosad is good.

10

ROSE: They're, some say, the best in the world.

ADMIRAL TURNER: No. It may be very good in its limited sphere. But there are only two intelligence services that are worldwide in capability, the KGB in the Soviet Union and the American intelligence community centered around the CIA.

ROSE: And the CIA is every bit as good as the KGB?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think so. At least as good as the KGB.

But, you see, only we have these expensive satellites. Only we can afford the total worldwide coverage. A Mosad, a British intelligence can be very good in certain specialties. But if you look at Mosad's record in this recent war, why were the Israelis so terribly surprised that there were vast stockpiles of munitions in Lebanon? They seemed to be overwhelmed by that when they found it.

So we all have our blinders in certain areas.

ROSE: Admiral Stansfield Turner.

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ROSE: If this was your last lecture, what would you want to warn America about? What is the message that sort of is brimming inside of you to say, "This is what concerns me most about the future of this Republic"?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Charlie, we have to learn to take a longer-term, more-global view of things. We do too much on a superficial way, and particularly on -- I'm sorry to say -- on television. We get the evening news, really, in about six or seven minutes. And then we go to a lot of amusing things. The world is much more complex.

We have to look at where the United States can help out and fit in in a much longer-term perspective.

ROSE: And be more sensitive to our allies.

ADMIRAL TURNER: And be more sensitive to our allies and to people in the Third World.

ROSE: I thank you, Admiral Stansfield Turner. Much success in private business and consulting. You're now working for NBC, as I understand it.

ADMIRAL TURNER: From time to time.

ROSE: We thank you for sharing this time with us.